

Pandemic prompts streaming opportunities in education, arts

By MARK BRENNAN
FOR THE SENTINEL

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many changes in the ways Americans conduct their lives and these changes differ both from state to state and region to region.

One thing that has been a loss in the lives of nearly everyone in the country is the elimination of live entertainment, youth sports leagues, education and group gatherings.

The cessation of professional and collegiate sports, music, and theatrical performances, retail shopping, dining out, weddings and church services, fraternal organizations and going to the movies, has been national in scope.

An unexpected positive outcome of all this has been the unprecedented expansion of live streamed events, often available for later viewing, presenting everyone with the chance to enjoy world class performances, lectures from renowned educators and how-to classes from some of the world's great artists.

There are hundreds of online exercise classes available on YouTube, which has become an even more essential media platform during the COVID crisis, and through Zoom, including livestreams of yoga and fitness classes.

In addition, major universities Harvard, Yale, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Stanford and many state schools, including the University of Oregon and Oregon State University, have added free classes for community members to take.

Most of these are offered to interested residents with registration fees waived or eliminated. These institutions have generally updated their individual websites to share the classes and activities available both to registered students, and for free to interested community members.

Many museums, theaters and performance groups are also increasing the number of live streaming performances, archival tours and lectures and video retrospectives of past exhibits that are available on their websites.

The Smithsonian Institution is the largest complex of educational, research and archival collections in the world. It has added significantly to all the institute's virtual platforms in light of the pandemic.

These efforts have made the Smithsonian one of the world's foremost online educators in the world.

The decision by the Smithsonian to find some way to continue with its mission, despite the restrictions put in place to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, has resulted in a unique opportunity for homebound citizens with many different types of interests.

The wide array of education and cultural assets are owned and maintained by the American people and are now available to more people — not just here but around the world — than ever before.

There are daily schedules of classes, workshops and lectures that are often live, with museum guides from the featured institution, and special archived

items that are only suitable for viewing under controlled circumstances.

One of the main areas of American culture that has been diminished during this time of closure has been in the realm of artistic performances.

Concerts, plays and annual tourist favorites like Eugene's Oregon Bach Festival and Ashland's Oregon Shakespeare Festival have cancelled their respective seasons.

While the Bach Festival has cancelled its 2020 season, for the first time is presenting a "Best Of" series, which includes many virtuoso performances from the nearly 50-year-old festival.

Sabrina Madison-Cannon, Dean of U of O School of Music and Dance, oversees the world-famous event and recently released a statement announcing the season cancellation.

"We've all been finding new ways to connect in this unprecedented era of social distancing," said Madison-Cannon. "In the weeks and months to come, we'll be announcing a variety of ways that you'll be able to enjoy the rich musical legacy of the Oregon Bach Festival from the comfort of your own home."

One initiative is a series of "Oregon Bach Festival Radio" shows that will be broadcast on KWAX-FM Classical Oregon and live-streamed at KWAX.uoregon.edu with hosts Peter van de Graaff and Rocky Lamanna.

Madison-Cannon also suggested listeners relive special past performances from, since every episode of the radio show will fea-

ture a selection of memorable past performances.

There will be a new broadcast to listen to every weekday during June 26 through July 10, the dates when the festival would have been held this summer.

For more information, visit oregonbach-festival.org.

While the Oregon Shakespeare Festival will not be entertaining visitors this season, National Theater Live (NTL), ntlive.nationaltheatre.org.uk, has scheduled a free performance of "The Madness of George III" for this week. Another UK based live performance platform, What'sOnStage.com, lists free upcoming performances at the Royal Opera House, Shakespeare's Globe Theater and performances by the legendary troops of Cirque du Soleil.

New York, one of the American cities hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, has been the most proactive when it comes to transferring live productions to online platforms.

The NYC American Museum of Natural History has a daily live event scheduled, which will include commentary by staff, and the New York Metropolitan Opera will be streaming performances from its vast archives on a nightly basis at 4:30 PDT.

The nation's first public broadcasting station, National Education Television, WNET, produces and presents PBS series "Nature," "Great Performances," "American Masters" and a range of documentaries, children's programs, and local news and cultural which are all

now available online.

The Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts will be presenting a variety of free musical productions over the summer, listing events from the Met and the New York Philharmonic as scheduled.

The NY Times is offering an ongoing series of lectures from its staff writers and columnists. Highlighted this month is children's graphic artist

Wendy McNaughton, who will be live streaming daily at 10 a.m. PDT for 30 minutes or so, "Which is just long enough for a parent to get a little work done, take a shower and take a couple of deep breaths," McNaughton said.

These are just a small number of the ever growing list of online viewing options available in both livestream and on demand.

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